



Meeting Notes
LGPC Ad-Hoc Septic Systems Committee
11/4/21, Meeting #5

Attendees: Committee & Members of the Public

Location: Zoom

Time: 2:00-3:30 PM

Discussion:

- LGPC Board of Commissioners Response to Ad Hoc Committee Recommendation
 - The recommendation of the Commission's Ad-Hoc Septic Working Group was that the Commission should advance with detailed concepts for a septic system inspection program for Lake George. Commissioners' consensus response from their October 26, 2021 meeting was that they are in favor of exploring inspection program options and potentially expanded design standards. It was agreed that more consideration of design standards from the technical subcommittee is needed.
- Advancing Lake George Septic Inspection Program Concepts
 - Septic 'Inspection' Program (one-time fee for inspection) versus Septic 'Management' Program (smaller annual fee for annual discharge permit)
 - A summary of septic inspection program funding options was discussed. All existing researched programs across NYS have done the Inspection Program model, charging per inspection. A 'Management Program' of annual fees for Lake George would be the first of this type in the State, but would follow the Commission's original early 1990's model of a 'permit to discharge' wastewater for properties on septic systems in the Park.
 - Queensbury Supervisor Strough and Bolton Deputy Supervisor Wilson expressed their support for a septic inspection program and potentially offer financial resources as their situation allows.
 - It was noted that any septic inspection program will naturally lead to other requirements such as upgrades, maintenance and education, suggesting a management program could better address these multiple issues. Also, a management program may be better accepted by the public if they are aware of the

- services they are getting such as an inspection every five years, education, technical assistance, etc.
- Two types of inspection models were discussed. The first, which is currently used by Queensbury, uses internal staff as inspectors; this program provides a great level of control and quality of inspection but is relatively higher in cost to the town and homeowners. The second model, currently used by Bolton, uses trained and qualified septic haulers to do the inspection and submit paperwork; there is little cost and overhead to the town but there is also no oversight and consistency of inspection. The Committee expressed support for quality and consistency across the Basin. Concern was expressed that the volume of inspections annually could be logistically challenging.
 - ETU's and their frequency of maintenance was discussed. Some members of the Committee supported a high frequency of inspection of these systems, though it was noted these units recurring manufacturers' management agreements. Any inspection program would not replace the requisite management agreement inspections. It was also noted that ETU's can sometimes be left off during winter months, an issue that may need to be addressed in an inspection or education program.
 - Questions on holding tanks were taken by the Department of Health. It was noted that holding tanks are not allowed for new construction and not seen as best practice. The Department of Health supported considering holding tanks the same as other systems in an inspection program.
 - The group discussed seasonal staff inspectors and the potential ideas for which they would be hired, trained, and managed.
- Recurrence interval (inspections on property transfer versus recurring 5-10 year cycle)
 - Most members of the Committee supported a higher frequency of inspection (every five years instead of ten). However, it was noted that frequency of inspection should not be traded for quality if Commission resources are limited.
 - Funding cost-share options from the Department of State were discussed.
 - It was commented that the initial inspections should include a site analysis during the information gathering part of the program.
 - The group discussed how any septic failures requiring system replacement would be handled from a review and approval standpoint. There is a patchwork of approvals across the basin between towns and counties, with each entity handling it their own way. The committee noted a preference for a consistent septic system approval process, but also noted the significant financial and technical challenges it would pose to one agency (i.e. the LGPC). Potential delegation of any new authorities to local municipalities, similar to the Commission's stormwater program, were discussed. Consistency would again be a challenge under such a delegation.
 - Inspections in CEA versus inspections in remainder of Park
 - It was noted that approximately half of the septic systems in the Park are outside of the Critical Environmental Area, and the group discussed whether inspection of these should also be considered.

- Inspection of these systems at property transfer was considered; a challenge of this may be tracking these transfers and addressing LLCs passed between families.
 - The issue of bedrooms and septic sizing was discussed. Some feedback from the Committee was that current town and county regulations inadvertently allow for homeowners to expand their houses beyond current system capacity by calling an expansion something other than a bedroom. Consistency across the Basin was expressed to be important.
- Technical Standards Subcommittee Report (Sean Doty, Chazen)
 - The group meets biweekly to discuss existing septic system standards, and whether they are sufficient to optimize protection of Lake George. If not, what additional standards can be adopted in a potential LGPC program. Comment is upcoming from the Department of Health and Conservation. It was noted that towns around the Lake George Basin already have some additional standards (i.e. APA Q4), but there is inconsistency.
 - Next Steps
 - Commission staff will more fully analyze and vet the idea of a ‘septic management program’, using annual ‘permits to discharge’ and an annual fee, similar to the Commission’s original 1991 program.
 - Commission staff will discuss with Hannah Neilly her idea about community-based grants to assist in the planning/implementation of any program such as this.
 - Commission staff will work to determine how property transfers are currently tracked by the Towns of Bolton and Queensbury, and see if there is a viable option to manage a septic inspection program on property transfer for properties outside the CEA.
 - Commission staff will reach out to all municipalities and counties that oversee septic system approvals in the LG Park to determine and document the workload they manage on this front.
 - Commission will organize a meeting for LG Park Municipal leadership to discuss this overall initiative, and to discuss their local involvement in septic system management in their jurisdiction.